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ABSTRACT

Presented is a summary of a 3 day 1977 conference on secondary and postsecondary education for gifted and talented (G/T) students. The specific objective of the conference was the identification of key issues. Four major areas of concern were addressed by participants (sample recommendations in parentheses): administration (guidelines and personnel should be available from the State Department of Public Instruction, teacher training institutions should be encouraged to prepare teachers to educate G/T students, schools should encourage students to participate in advanced courses without the threat of falure, and flexible scheduling should be considered): funding (some funding for G/T students without reference to need should be established as a way of recognizing superior perfcrmance and local industry and professions should be encouraged to consider financial support of G/T programs): information dissemination and communication (a statewide committee should be developed to formulate policy): and guidance (care should be exercised in the identification process and support should be provided for the social-emotional aspects of the student's life). (CL)

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SECONDARY-POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Report of the Secondary-Post Conference
on Gifted and Talented Education
Nashville, Indiana

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SECONDARY-POST SECONDARY EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Report of the Secondary-Post Secondary Conference on Gifted and Talented Education: Nashville, Indiana

INTRODUCTION

On March 2,3, and 4, 1977, a group of twenty-eight secondary and post secondary educators from the State of Indiana convened in a planning and development conference to consider the educational needs of gifted and talented (G/T) students. The specific objective of this working conference was the identification and organization of key issues related to continuity of secondary and post secondary education for gifted and talented students.

The conference participants subscribed to the following working definitions in the process of developing the issues contained in this report:

> Gifted and talented students are "those children and youth whose talents, abilities and accomplishments allow them to excel or to show the potential to excel consistently in any human endeavor, and who require qualitatively differentiated educational programs and/or services in order to realize their contribution to self and society. This includes but is not limited to:
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> 1. The academically gifted-general intellectual ability and/or demonstrated specific academic aptitude.
> 2. The creatively gifted-divergent, imaginative, original or productive thinking.
> 3. The kinesthetically gifted-psychmotor talent or skills in the visual or performing arts.
> 4. The psycho-socially gifted-leadership ability and ethical or more development." 1
>
> Acceleration options are "those which reduce the calendar time associated with particular educational programs and levels and include:
>
> 1. acceleration by grade skipping,
> 2. acceleration by advanced placement,
> 3. acceleration by 'visiting' higher level classes,
> 4. credit by examination,
> 5. acceleration by early high school graduation and early college entry, and
> 6. attendance (enrollment and receiving credit) in college classes before high school graduation." 2

Four key issues were identified as being related to the continuity of educational experience for G/T secondary and post secondary students: (1) Administrative Concerns, (2) Funding, (3) Information Dissemination and Communication, and (4) Guidance. Administrative Concerns were those dealing with administrative structures, programs, options and State Rules. Funding concerns centered around school system requirements and individual student need for financial support of appropriate educational program opportunities. Information Dissemination and Communication concerns included theoretical and practical aspects of promoting programs and recruiting individual students. Guidance concerns involved the need for attention to individual, family and social relationships created by differentiated educational experiences for G/T students.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following more specifically discusses the four major areas of concern addressed by the conference participants.

Administration

The concerns in this area are addressed primarily to the perspective of the Secondary School Administrator who considers providing acceleration options for talented students. Three major issues which evolved were: (1) the ability of existing administrative structures to accomodate any necessary modifications, (2) the ability of program modifications to meet existing program and State Rule requirements, and (3) the overall availability of program options.

Many participants felt that the ability of an administrative structure to accomodate program modifications would center around the availability of funding and leadership and administrator-teacher relationships. Specific recommendations from participants are:

1. Some funding must be available (see following sections, Funding).
2. Leadership in the form of guidelines and personnel must be available from the State Department of Public Instruction.
3. Leadership in the form of identification and program development committees must emerge from within the local school and community.
4. Consultants who can successfully execute staff development activities must be identified from around the state.
5. Research must be evaluated and disseminated in a practical, perhaps handbook, form so that it can be more readily available to action-line practitioners.
6. Teacher training institutions must be encouraged to prepare teachers to educate G/T students.
7. Administrators must reassure teaching staff that acceleration options will not threaten their job security (by significantly affecting teacher/student ratios) or job status (by skipping students past their classes).

8. Appropriate in-service training must be available for teachers who instruct and interact with G/T students.

Most of the participants expressed interest in the ways in which program and State Rule requirements could be adapted to be more realistic in meeting the educational needs of G/T students. In this respect, grades, program entry requirements and Rule revisions were considered. Recommendations are:

1. Schools should encourage students to participate in advanced courses without the threat of failure by using pass-fail, weighted-rank or other grading options. It is agreed that advanced work must always adhere to high standards of quality, but educators are reminded that students are cognizant of the need to "look good" for college admissions. The threat of lower grades in advanced courses will discourage G/T from enrolling in courses where there is risk of less than an excellent evaluation.
2. Post secondary schools should be encouraged to review policies which prohibit entry without a high school diploma, and should be encouraged to open certain courses to talented students still enrolled in high school.
3. Both high schools and colleges should be encouraged to facilitate granting credit and allowing entry to a higher level on the basis of proficiency. Credit by testing is one possibility.
4. The following revisions of the Administrative Handbook are strongly recommended:
   a. High school credit should be granted for junior high/middle school students who do advanced work.
   b. High school credit should be granted for college work completed by high school students.
   c. Non-graduates should be awarded a high school diploma when they have successfully completed one year of studies in an institution of higher education.
   d. Flexibility for granting credit should be maintained.
   e. Graduation criteria for G/T students should be based on performance or accumulation of competencies rather than on time spent in school or numbers of semesters in attendance.
   f. Minimum numbers of credits for graduation should be no more for G/T students than for all other students.

A final administrative concern of interest among participants was the degree to which programmatic options would even be available to G/T students. Participants felt these recommendations would assist in the development of options:

1. Advancement and enrichment must be available to non-college bound as well as to college bound students. Schools must take care to provide for programs in other than academic areas.
2. On the whole, the total high school curriculum should be reviewed in terms of its provision for G/T students, with alternative programs and Advanced Placement receiving special attention.
3. Flexible scheduling must be considered. Advanced Placement programs, course expansions, dual attendance in high school and college, and re-entry into high school settings requires that it be possible.
4. High schools and colleges must communicate more extensively about C/T students, and especially about those who are accelerated. Specifically, college teaching/learning methods should be incorporated into high school advanced courses, college instructors should be oriented to the characteristics of talented young students and students should be oriented to aspects of college-level functioning.

Funding

Funding was an aspect of administrative concern, but was viewed as important and pervasive enough to rate its inclusion here as a separate area of attention. Conference participants became increasingly aware that some educational opportunities can be provided with minimal funding by community, state or federal sources, but that a coordinated, comprehensive program for all talented students requires additional, secure funding. Assistance is needed both for program development and maintenance and for individual student support. This funding should come from a variety of sources.

1. Specific recommendations for funding of programs for G/T student include:
   a. formula support for G/T students, in which some talent area programs would receive more reimbursement support than others. It is recommended that music, art and laboratory sciences, for instance, receive reimbursement in keeping with their greater, differential expenses,
   b. enumeration of G/T students in Average Daily Attendance (ADA) counts, so that administrators will not be faced with the fiscal disadvantages of acceleration options,
   c. reimbusement for special transportation needs associated with G/T programs, and
   d. federal and state grants for program development, implementation and evaluation.

2. Cost-effectiveness of various programs and acceleration options must be researched.
3. Funding and reimbursement patterns of other states should be studied.

Direct assistance to individuals pursing accelerated education was viewed as a need by the participants.

1. Some funding for G/T students without reference to need should be established as a way of recognizing superior performance.
2. Universities should be encouraged to meet the funding needs of G/T accelerates, to consider fee remissions to students, and to fund part-time as well as full-time students.
3. Reimbursements should be made to parents for special expenses such as transportation and equipment. If accelerated students enter college before a family has reached fiscal stability or before the maturation of planned annuity programs, parents should receive reimbursement support to cover college expenses.

The participants were concerned with the sources and stability of funding:

1. Funding should be derived from community, state and federal sources. Optimally this funding should involve a combination of sources in order to provide stable and continuing sources of support.
2. State and federal sources should increase allocations to G/T programs.
3. Educators involved in G/T programming should develop skills in grantsmanship and maintain communication networks to disseminate information about available funding.
4. The Department of Public Instruction should take the leadership role in exploring and identifying federal funds for G/T programs and should aid local school districts in proposal writing and obtaining those funds.
5. Local industry and professions should be encouraged to examine the benefits of financially supported G/T programs.
6. Well organized groups of parents, students and educators should develop lobbying skills and organize to approach the state legislature.

Information Dissemination and Communication

Participants discussed theoretical and practical aspects of communication and information-dissemination strategies for programs which serve gifted and talented students. Concerns were expressed about the ethical implication of recruiting strategies, and about the philosophical orientation towards egalitarianism. Some specific recommendations about information dissemination were made:

1. Allienation problems frequently arise between high schools and colleges because of a lack of communication. This must be circumvented by discussions and negotiation of issues such as:
   a. awarding credit,
   b. determining course/program content,
   c. "pirating" of students from the high school,
   d. recruitment ethics with talented students, especially with talented accelerants.

2. College educators should be reminded that the teacher may be a major adult role model for the student. They must assist in providing a model(s) who can relate to students in non-cognitive areas and provide opportunities for affective growth.

Conference participants discussed a problem they named "a philosophy of egalitarianism." This philosophy describes an American ideal of equality that has been used to deny differentiated experience to talented students on the grounds that such an experience might be unequal and hence unfair to other students. Participants felt that this philosophy and it's translation into some educational practices was in need of reevaluation.

1. It is recommended that appropriate education of individuals should be emphasized, stressing the need of each individual to make a contribution to self and society and the reality that uniformity of experiences is not equality of experience.

The specific recommendations about dissemination include:

1. Information about G/T programs, opportunities and developments should be communicated via existing professional groups, contacts and publications. The development of a new newsletter specifically about G/T in this state should be avoided.
2. Concepts, methods and projects should be demonstrated throughout the state in workshops, conferences and in-service sessions.
3. Special dissemination efforts should be directed at groups affecting G/T students across the state, such as the State Scholarship Commission.
4. A state-wide committee should be formed to develop policy and serve as a focal point for discussion and decision making. This committee should serve as the hub of a dissemination/communication network and act as a central processing system to ensure upward growth in an understanding of G/T education. It should include adequate representation from all groups concerned.
5. Existing model programs in the state should be identified and on-site visitation to those programs should be arranged.

Guidance

The issues discussed by participants in relation to the area of guidance involved a concern for the individual, his interpersonal and social relationships during acceleration, and the processes of guidance associated with the education of talented high school students.

A major concern was expressed for the need to define, identify and assess talented students appropriately.

1. It is recommended that a definition, identification process and assessment strategy for G/T students be accepted and that appropriate guidelines specifying procedures (in broad terms) should be developed. The guidelines should recognize that there is no best single method for identification and assessment, but that procedures can be outlined in a general way.
2. These guidelines for identification and assessment should be made available by the State Department of Public Instruction. Guidelines should recommend multiple assessment strategies, assessment by several persons involved in the student's education, and periodic reassessment.
3. Institutional and field research is needed to determine the best testing patterns for assessment of talent areas.
4. Diagnostic centers should be established, and talent area consultants should be available for assistance in assessing special talent areas.
5. Due process rights of students should be respected during any assessment effort.
6. Documentation and evaluation of identification and assessment processes should be maintained and used to improve the process in the future.

Several participants expressed concern for the social-emotional aspects of the student's life and the possibility of problems arising with the family and peers. It was the feeling of the participants that proper care exercised in the identification process would minimize these problems. Several recommendations were made for advocacy and support at individual and program levels:

1. Counselors must recognize that there are critical times in the assessment and decision-making process that may require more support than others. Counselors must also be willing to provide that support.
2. Gifted and talented students must have a network of support at personal as well as intellectual or talent levels. The pattern of support will be different for each student but should come from multiple family, community and school sources.
3. Talented students should be assisted in recognizing and dealing with social and peer forces which subtly, but sometimes effectively, encourage them to sublimate rather than develop their talent.
4. Talented students must be assisted in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The tasks involved in that transition should be identified and translated into learning activities to assist those talented students who make the transition earlier than the average student,
5. Support must be available for parents of G/T students. Parent support groups and communication systems may be transition to educational options, program evaluation and early graduation.

6. Individual choice from among available options should be encouraged. In order to present students with a set of options, a comprehensive state survey of post secondary opportunities should be undertaken and updated periodically.
7. Counselors should assume responsibility for knowing resources and considering options with G/T students. This information should be provided through the information-dissemination strategies available throughout the state.

REFERENCES

1. Indiana Department of Public Instruction, Status/Resources/ Survey for Gifted and Talented Education, State II, Final Report, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1975.

2. Indiana Department of Public Instruction, Indiana Study of the Needs and Programs of the Gifted and Talented, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1976.